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SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

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SUBJECT: JORDAN'S DIPLOMATS FOCUS ON TRADE AND INVESTMENT

SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED.

11. (sbu) Summary. Reflecting the emphasis he has put on economic and commercial development and the growing private sector export and investment orientation of Jordan's economy, King Abdullah personally launched a four-day USAID-supported economic/commercial training program for Jordanian ambassadors on August 14. This follows a decision by the king to reorient the work of Jordan's ambassadors, who have traditionally focused on political and cultural activities, toward increased support for Jordan's business community -- as symbolized by the appointment of prominent businessman Karim Kwar as ambassador to the United States. The foreign ministry is planning to follow up with a broader econ/commercial training initiative for all of Jordan's diplomatic corps. End summary.

King Opens Investment Promotion Forum

12. (sbu) On August 14, King Abdullah officially opened a four-day conference designed to train and encourage Jordanian ambassadors to increase their focus on promoting investment and trade. The August 13-16 program, which had low-profile funding support from USAID's AMIR program, included short modules on the roles of Jordan's various trade promotion agencies (JIB, JEDCO). In addition, respective economic ministers gave presentations on the work of the ministries of trade, telecom, finance, and planning. The Charge gave a well-received presentation on opportunities for Jordanian ambassadors to use the U.S.-Jordan FTA to promote Jordanian trade as well as inward and outward investment. The EU charge gave a similar presentation.

13. (u) The program also featured familiarization visits to Jordan's largest industrial estate, a Qualified Industrial Zone (QIZ), and a tour of the new Aqaba Special Economic Zone, in an effort to enthuse the assembled ambassadors about the kingdom's most promising export sectors and its comparative advantages as an investment destination. Ambassadors by and large came away energized about promoting investment in their countries of responsibility, and the program was deemed a success by both foreign ministry reps and by the palace's economic unit, which organized the program.

King Heralds New Focus for Ambassadors

14. (sbu) This first-of-its-kind program was an outgrowth of the king's desire to have ambassadors abroad do more commercial work. An indication of this shift was the king's appointment of Karim Kwar, a successful IT entrepreneur with no previous government experience, to be Jordan's ambassador in Washington. According to Kwar, the king told him upon his appointment: "You focus on trade and investment promotion; handling the political relationship is my job." Kwar said the king instructed him that his first responsibility would be to create success stories from the FTA.

15. (u) The king reiterated this message to all his ambassadors during the opening. To encourage this new focus, the king announced that, starting in 2003, the palace would present an award to the ambassador with the most impressive economic performance each year. He highlighted the expanding role of Jordan's private sector as the motor of economic growth.

Comment

16. (sbu) This program is further evidence of the seriousness with which the king and Jordan treat economic

and commercial issues. In addition to the USAID support, the embassy's econ section worked with the foreign ministry and the king's economic advisor to design the program. As part of our ongoing effort to press ahead with effective implementation of the FTA, we will encourage similar training activities in the future with segments devoted to the FTA. In the short term, we will continue to follow-up with the palace and ministry by 1) providing information on the State Department's Cobb Award, and 2) working with them to design a broader trade and investment promotion training program for Jordanian diplomats, which will be led by the foreign ministry's Diplomatic Institute. We will continue our initial discussions with NFATC regarding its possible help in developing such a program.

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